

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0279

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CONFIDENTIAL LISBON 3505

USUN FOR AMB. SCOTT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PO, US

SUBJ: USAF REQUEST FOR LOW ALTITUDE FLIGHT TRAINING

IN PORTUGAL

SUMMARY: EMBASSY SUPPORTS USAF REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO
SEEK GOP CLEARANCE FOR LOW-ALTITUDE USAF C-130 TRAINING
FLIGHTS IN PORTUGAL. END SUMMARY.

1. USAF EUROPE HAS PROPOSED DAYTIME LOW-ATLTIUDE C-130
AIRCRAFT TRAINING OVER PORTUGAL. SEVENTH SPECIAL
OPERATIONS SQUADRON (7TH SOS), RHEIN MAIN AIR BASE, GERMANY,
IS IN NEED OF NEW LOW-ALTITUDE TRAINING AREAS BECAUSE
OF HIGH MID-AIR COLLISION POTENTIAL IN GERMANY AND
BECAUSE SPAIN, AT PRESENT THE PRIMARY LOW ALTITUDE
TRAINING SITE, HAS NOW RECEIVED ITS OWN C-130S AND
WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR USE AFTER DECEMBER 1974.
LOW-ALTITUDE TRAINING IN PORTUGAL WOULD BE IDEAL AS
THE TERRAIN IS RUGGED AND THE AIRSPACE IS UNCONGESTED.
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2. PROPOSAL INVOLVES UNILATERAL TRAINING AND JOINT TRAINING. FOR UNILATERAL TRAINING, THE 7TH SOS WOULD DEPLOY ONCE A MONTH TO ROTA OR TORREJON AND THE FOLLOWING TWO DAYS FLY THREE HOURS PER DAY AT LOW ALTITUDE IN PORTUGAL. USAF SUGGESTED ROUTE CAN BE CHANGED AT THE CONVENIENCE OF PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT. FOR JOINT TRAINING, IF PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT DESIRES, THE 7TH SOS COULD MAKE THE C-130 AVAILABLE FOR JUMPS BY PORTUGUESE PARATROOPS IN CONJUNCTION WITH LOW-ALTITUDE TRAINING. JOINT TRAINING WOULD BE CONDUCTED FOR UP TO FIVE DAYS PER MONTH DEPENDING ON PORTUGUESE PARTICIPATION AND WHETHER PORTUGUESE PREFER WE BASE AIRCRAFT IN PORTUGAL RATHER THAN SPAIN. PORTUGUESE PARATROOP OPERATIONS WOULD PROBABLY BE CONDUCTED FROM TANCOS AIR BASE, 70 MILES NNE OF LISBON.

3. IF PROPOSAL IS APPROVED, DEFENSE ATTACHE WILL APPROACH PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF, GENERAL DIOGO NETO, WITH THE DETAILS OF THIS TRAINING PROPOSAL.

4. EMBASSY SUPPORTS THIS REQUEST. WE SEE LITTLE CHANCE THAT THIS TRAINING, WHICH WOULD TAKE PLACE WELL AWAY FROM THE URBAN AREAS, WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF ADVERSE PUBLIC OR MEDIA ATTENTION. ON THE OTHER HAND WE SEE REAL ADVANTAGES IN FOSTERING THIS TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL CONTACT BETWEEN OPERATIONAL UNITS OF OUR RESPECTIVE MILITARY FORCES. BECAUSE OF PAST RESTRAINTS IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY, ESPECIALLY WITH AFRICA-ASSOCIATED FORCES, SUCH CONTACTS HAVE BEEN A GOOD DEAL LESS FREQUENT THEN WE CONSIDER DESIRABLE IN A POLITICAL SITUATION WHERE THE MILITARY ARE THE ULTIMATE DECISION MAKERS. WE EXPECT THAT PORTUGUESE MILITARY WOULD BE PLEASED AT OPPORTUNITY TO WORK OUT SUCH A MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS ARRANGEMENT. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE PARATROOPS, PART OF THE AIR FORCE IN PORTUGAL, ARE CONSIDERED TO BE STRONG SUPPORTERS OF PRESIDENT SPINOLA.

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